

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
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USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU

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LIMDIS

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EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR PDIP EAGR VM CB LA
SUBJECT: VISITOR FROM HANOI: COMMENTS ON INDOCHINA

SUMMARY: RECENT VISITOR FROM HANOI SAYS SRV-CAMBODIAN BORDER DIFFICULTIES ARE CONFIRMED BY AUTHORITIES IN HANOI. VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS ARE REPORTEDLY RESISTING RUSSIAN AND CHINESE DESIRES TO ESTABLISH CONSULATES IN HO CHI MINH CITY AND ARE CANDIDLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT QUICK NORMALIZATION OF SRV-US RELATIONS. VIETNAMESE RICE SUPPLY SITUATION REMAINS SERIOUS. CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR TO SRV CHIDES WESTERNERS FOR INTEREST IN DEMOCRATIC CAMBODIA BUT OFFERS A FEW COMMENTS NONETHELESS. END SUMMARY.

1. BORDER PROBLEMS. KNOWLEDGEABLE WESTERN VISITOR FROM HANOI TOLD EMBASSY AUG 29 THAT CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE BORDER
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DIFFICULTIES ARE COMMONLY KNOWN IN HANOI AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY SRV OFFICIALS. FOR EXAMPLE, DURING DISCUSSION WITH FRENCH CONCERNING A CEMENT PLANT PROJECT AT HA TIEN IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, SUPPORTED BY FRANCE, A SENIOR BUILDING MINISTRY OFFICIAL ADMITTED THAT THE PROJECT, TWELVE MILES FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER, WAS DELAYED BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS WITH THE CAMBODIANS OVER THE BORDER. VISITOR HAS ALSO HEARD THAT THE

CAMBODIANS OCCUPIED CHAU DOC PROVINCE TOWN IN SRV DURING MAY OR JUNE. VIETNAMESE EVENTUALLY OUSTED THE CAMBODIANS, BUT REPORTEDLY SUFFERED 400 VIETNAMESE CASUALTIES IN THE PROCESS.

2. VISITOR HYPOTHEZED THAT PEKING COULD BE INVOLVED IN PHNOM PENH'S AGGRESSIVE POSTURE ON THE VIETNAMESE AND LAOTIAN BORDER TO CAUTION HANOI AGAINST MOVING TOO CLOSE TO MOSCOW AND TO REMIND THE VIETNAMESE THAT THERE IS A SOFT UNDERBELLY ADJACENT TO THE SRV. IN THIS VIEW PEKING MAY ALSO WISH TO EXPRESS DISPLEASURE OVER VIETNAMESE TROOP PRESENCE IN LAOS, WHICH WESTERNERS IN HANOI UNDERSTAND TO BE INCREASING. SRV, VISITOR SAID, STILL DENIES THAT VIETNAMESE TROOPS ARE IN LAOS. AS ELSEWHERE, DIPLOMATS IN HANOI REGARD THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED SRV-LAOS ACCORDS AS MAKING LAOS A VIETNAMESE PROTECTORATE. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH CHINESE MAY APPROVE OF CAMBODIANS' TWEAKING HANOI ON ITS BORDERS, WE DOUBT PEKING HAS MUCH INFLUENCE ON PHNOM PENH'S BORDER POLICY.)

3. CONSULATES IN SAIGON. ACCORDING TO VISITOR, PEKING AND MOSCOW ARE PRESSURING HANOI TO PERMIT OPENING OF CHINESE AND SOVIET CONSULATES IN HO CHI MINH CITY. SINCE HANOI EVIDENTLY DOES NOT WANT CHOLON (CHINESE SECTION OF HO CHI MINH CITY) EXPOSED TO PEKING'S INFLUENCE, VIETNAMESE ARE RESISTING CHINESE, AND, EVEN HANDEDLY, SOVIET REQUESTS.

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HOWEVER, WITH THREE VIETNAMESE CONSULATES NOW ESTABLISHED IN THE PRG (CANTON, NANNING, AND KUNMING) HANOI EVENTUALLY MAY HAVE TO RELENT.

4. RELATIONS WITH U.S. VISITOR SAID OFFICIALS IN HANOI ARE CANDIDLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT EARLY NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE US. POSITIONS ARE TOO FAR APART TO BRIDGE EASILY, THEY SAY.

5. ECONOMY. ESTIMATES ON RICE PRODUCTION PREDICT A 1.2 MILLION TON SHORTFALL THIS YEAR, WHICH WOULD EXCEED THE SHORTFALL LAST YEAR ESTIMATED VARIOUSLY FROM 500 THOUSAND TO 1 MILLION TONS. PART OF THE SHORTFALL IS BEING MADE UP BY SOVIETS WHO ARE REPORTEDLY PURCHASING THE RICE FROM AUSTRALIA. IN ADDITION TO DROUGHT, FROST, AND TYPHOONS IN NORTH AND CENTRAL VIET-NAM, AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN THE SOUTH HAVE REDUCED SUPPLIES AVAILABLE. (SEE BANGKOK 12604 AND 17324.) OFFICIAL RICE PRICES ARE TOO LOW TO ENCOURAGE PRODUCTION IN THE SOUTH, AND THE NEW BUREAUCRACY HAS NOT YET DEVELOPED AN EFFICIENT DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, AUTHORITIES IN HANOI HAVE SLACKENED PROHIBITIONS ON PRIVATE PLOTS IN THE NORTH

AND SOUTH, REFLECTION, OUR VISITOR COMMENTED, GREATER CONFIDENCE ON THE PART OF THE REGIME. HANOI IS ALSO RELATIVELY RELAXED ABOUT SMALL PRIVATE BUSINESSES. VISITOR IS AWARE OF A VIETNAMESE HAIRDRESSER WHO CLAIMS SHE MAKES \$400 (US) A MONTH DRESSING VIETNAMESE WOMEN'S HAIR.

6. CAMBODIA. IN FREQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR TO SRV, VISITOR HAS NOT RAISED POLITICAL SUBJECTS BUT AMBASSADOR HAS COMMENTED ON DEMOCRATIC CAMBODIA (DC) AND FOREIGN CURIOSITY ABOUT HAPPENINGS THERE. RECONFIRMING THE OBVIOUS, DC OPPOSES CITIES, SINCE, LIKE OTHER EXTERNAL INFLUENCES, CITIES ARE CORRUPTING. DC IS ANTI-MECHANISTIC BECAUSE USE OF MACHINES LEADS TO DEPENDENCY ON THEM. MONEY HAS OF COURSE BEEN ABOLISHED THROUGH THE SIMPLE

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DEVICE OF DECLARING THAT IT HAS NO VALUE. MONEY IS UNNECESSARY SINCE EACH COMMUNE CAN BARTER PRODUCTS AS NECESSARY. AS FOR FOREIGN INTEREST IN CAMBODIA, THE AMBASSADOR QUERIES, "WHY SHOULD OTHER COUNTRIES OGLE CAMBODIA? THEY SHOULD ATTEND TO THEIR OWN AFFAIRS."

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